

Tenants Battle Slumlord and Arson

On May 7, 1980, tenants at 30 Walnut St. in Newark won their fight to have their building taken out of the hands of landlord Eliot Goldberg and placed into a receivership. This means that the District Court found Mr. Goldberg unable or unwilling to run the building in a responsible manner, and ordered the building placed with an independent manager.

The Tenants's fight began the week before Easter, when their gas and electricity were turned off because Goldberg hadn't paid a PSE&G bill of over \$4,000. This was the last straw for the tenants, who had suffered all winter without smoke detectors, had rotten plumbing and were infested with roaches. This was in spite of the fact that Goldberg was paid well over \$5,000 a month rent. Instead of paying the bills to keep the service on and keep the building in good repair, Goldberg pocketed the rent money and left the tenants to suffer in a declining building.

TENANTS PULL TOGETHER

This is a familiar story to many tenants in Newark and other New Jersey cities. But this time the tenants won!

Working with the Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods (NCN) and Essex Legal Services, the tenants organized to stay in the building and fight back. They organized themselves into a tenants association and began withholding rent. They began nightly arson watches, afraid that their building might burn down, like other buildings owned by Goldberg. Research by the NCN Arson Committee showed that Goldberg was well known by the City of Newark because of health and safety violations and non-payment of bills in many of his other buildings. Some of these buildings have been the scenes of repeated fires, many of them ARSON!



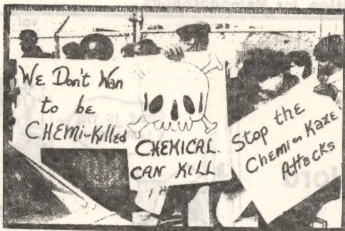
LAW PROTECTS TENANTS RIGHTS

The tenants also testified in court when Goldberg was brought up for all the code violations, and they worked with Legal Services to get the receivership. Now their rent money is going to pay for the services they pay for, and they are going to work with the East Orange Tenants Association and the Peoples Firehouse from Brooklyn to learn how to manage their building themselves.

This was a victory for the tenants at 30 Walnut St., but everyone who lives in Newark won too. Everytime a landlord like Goldberg fails to pay his city tax and water bills, they get figured into the general tax and water rates, and everyone in Newark ends up paying the bills instead. And when he doesn't pay PSE&G, not only the tenants suffer but we all do when our gas and electric rates go up. And everytime one of his buildings is abandoned, or burned down, precious housing is lost to the residents of Newark.

CITY OFFICIALS APPEAR HUSHED

It is clear that everyone in Newark has a stake in seeing that slumlords like Eliot Goldberg are exposed and their criminal operations stopped. The Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods is continuing its research into Mr. Goldberg. The ultimate aim is to work with community groups to organize tenants in all of his buildings, and to make a case to the City of Newark that forces the City to take action not just against Mr. Goldberg, but against all slumlords operating in the City. After all, every City department contacted about 30 Walnut Street knew what Mr. Goldberg was up to. It's up to the residences of Newark to question why the City doesn't act on this information. It's up to the residents to show the City that something can be done.



A Killer!

Dumping of hazardous waste should be of grave concern to all Newark residents. The Thomas H. Cook building on Dickerson & 1st Street is on the Department of Environment of Protection (DEP) list of 'hot spots' because of the 7,000 gallons of formaldehyde solution stored there.

Monday, May 19th was the date of Newark's most recent explosion of illegally stored unidentified chemicals at an abandoned building at 1197 McCartet Highway.

Let's get together around this serious problem before people get killed. On Saturday June 14th an intial meeting will be held to start building a coalition concerned with hazardous waste in New Jersey. The meeting is at the NJPIRG office at 204 W. State St., Trenton, from 9 A.M. - ? Newark people interested in going to this meeting and/or working on this problem please contact Arnold Cohen at Ironbound Health Project- phone 589-4668.



HELP FIGHT ARSON AND DISPLACEMENT

The victory of the 30 Walnut St. Tenants Association is an example that other tenants and their community organizations can follow in their struggle to stop the arson and displacement that have been allowed to happen for too long *

*For more information, contact Trish Jarecke or Lagretta Stebbins at NCN -- 643-7714

DISPLACEMENT is caused by actions of private owners or government agencies that force people to move from their homes and neighborhoods when they do not want to.

DISPLACEMENT can be caused by:

- urban renewal, highway building programs or school construction.
- real estate speculation and rehab i.e. "reinvestment" intending to attract middle and upper income people who can afford to pay higher rents.
- "disinvestment", taking money and services out of neighborhoods so that deteriorating conditions are left -- forcing those who can afford to move to do so.

NCN QUESTIONS CDBG BUDGET DEMANDS DETAILS

All Newark city departments and agencies responsible for administering federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in Newark are now required to submit line-item budgets detailing exactly how they will spend the federal monies.

Members of the Newark community have been calling for such budget reports for the past three years, and finally the city council has taken action. By an 8 to 1 vote, and sustaining that vote in the opposition to Mayor Kenneth Gibson's veto, an ordinance calling for line item budgets went into effect in March.

The ordinance will be of great help to the Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods (NCN) CDBG Monitoring Project. With the line item budgets in hand, the project can further substantiate that less than 25% of all Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP) monies actually reach homeowners anxious to do repairs. **DID CITY SPLURGE CDBG MONIES ON ITSELF?**

We will also be able to more fully assess the real administrative costs of the program, which by law, are not to exceed 20% of the total program costs. In Newark in 1980 the total CDBG allocation is \$17.3 million. Of that amount, \$13.3 million is budgeted for program cost. This spring, during an extended program review process, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) charged that the real administrative costs in Newark exceeded \$6.6 million or 49.6% of the total program budget.

The major intent of the program is to primarily benefit low and moderate income people, to meet housing needs and to meet social service needs that will help make low income communities stronger. Over the past five years, however, the major beneficiaries of the program have been large real estate developers, the middle and upper income and generally, the city's larger businesses.

NCN ISSUES FORMAL COMPLAINT

In February, NCN filed a formal administrative complaint with HUD monitors. Over thirty neighborhood people took a 10-foot by 6-foot letter to the HUD Area Office in the Gateway Building to make sure officials "got the message" that people were not pleased with the way federal CDBG money in Newark was being spent.

In the complaint, Newark residents urged that there be a full review of excessive administrative costs and a shifting of funds from administration into programs that actually meet the needs of people.

Some of the program expenditures that people from around the city have been recommending include: an increase in funding for day care services. (An increase in day care money could mean that under-paid staff could be paid living wages and that day care services could be expanded to meet the severe need among mothers.); development of a "workable" relocation assistance plan (required by law, and not in effect in Newark today); and a program for guaranteeing the right of first return to new housing by former residents where neighborhoods have been devastated by speculation and disinvestment, especially in the St. Lucy's area near Seventh Avenue.

NCN PLANS ACTION-STRATEGIES

HUD held up Newark's CDBG application prior to receiving our administrative complaint, but during its extended review, HUD has demanded answers to questions we have raised. We have yet to see the City comply. But if we keep the pressure on, we're hoping the 1981 program will reflect the expressed needs of residents throughout the City.

Our next meetings to develop further action strategies for impacting on the CDBG program in Newark will be held on June 17 and June 19, at 7:30 p.m. at NCN offices, 38 1/2 Walnut St. Newark. On the 17th we will discuss possible ways to affect the issues relating to housing conditions in Newark, such as demolition, need for low interest loan program, need for tool banks, need for a non-profit receivership mechanism. On the 19th we will discuss ways to increase the amount of CDBG money going for day care and health care services.



Citizens Fired-up

Firehouse Closings

*The following article is
reprinted from The Ironbound
Voice*

MORE TAXES, LESS PROTECTION, MORE DANGER?

How many minutes does it take for a fire to kill someone? How many minutes does it take for a fire truck to arrive at the scene of a fire?

The answers to these questions depend on whether any fire companies in Newark will be closed June 1.

Last month, Ironbound residents heard from local firemen that Engine Co. 16 on Ferry St. might be closed. 65 people came to a meeting to plan to stop the closing.

Several days later (perhaps in response to the Ironbound meeting) Fire Director Caufield announced that 3 different fire companies might be closed - Engine Co. 1 on Mulberry and Lafayette Sts. Truck Company 3 on West Market St., and the tactical unit at Prince St.

An article in the Star Ledger stated that all firehouses would would be kept open. However, fire companies would be closed. The way the system work, several fire companies may be located in one firehouse. Often a water company and a truck company are located together. Water companies are equipped to pump water. Truck companies provide the hook and ladder, and no water. To fight a fire effectively both kinds of companies are needed at the scene of a fire.

The men from the 3 companies which may be closed will be assigned to other companies. But jobs may be lost through "attrition" - not hiring someone to take the place of a person who retires. The result is the same as a lay-off, less people working than at the current time. The fire department is down from 816 men in 1970 to 700 men in 1980. In addition Newark has the highest fire death rate in the nation. The 2 areas where fire companies may close are areas which have had many fires.

The reasons given for the possible closings is a familiar one to residents who have watched their schools, police department, and other city services cut over the last year. "There is not enough money." Each year, the City spends a lot of money for administrative and planning purposes, but all these plans do not seem to be able to keep basic services for people who live in Newark operating effectively.

In addition, federal money for Newark keeps getting cut. Recently, the federal government decided to spend \$1 billion to help 1 corporation (Chrysler) to survive. What about the survival of Newark residents?

If companies close, the remaining fire companies will have to cover their area. This means that response time may be longer. If several fires happen, there may not be enough companies nearby available to fight the fire*

WHAT CAN PEOPLE DO?

Ironbound Block Association members, realizing that any fire company closings will endanger both people and property in Ironbound, have been contacting churches, schools, businesses and other groups around the city to work together to keep the fire companies open.

On May 12, people from Ironbound and other neighborhoods saw the movie PEOPLES FIREHOUSE, which tells the story of a successful fight by Brooklyn people to keep their firehouse open. Adam Veneski from the film, talked about what people can do, and offered to assist the group.

On May 21, people attended a City Council meeting to ask the Council to take action to stop the closings. About 75 people attended the meeting. In its statement (which one resident called "passing the buck") the Council said they could do nothing, and that residents would have to meet with Fire Director Caufield. This meeting is now being set up.

"They can't find the money, but they can find it for their own salaries," one resident said.

For more information about the firehouse struggle contact:

Nancy Zak - Ironbound Information Center

344-7210

What is NCN ?

NEWARK COALITION FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

The Newark Coalition for Neighborhoods is comprised of nine neighborhood-based groups, working with various school, church and parent groups and community activists to change the conditions of our lives in Newark.

We have found that from neighborhood to neighborhood the problems we face are the same: a shortage of decent housing at affordable rents; lack of code enforcement; lack of home-repair loans and grants; serious health hazards due to abandoned buildings and polluted air; inadequate education programs; a shortage of day care services and severely underpaid day care workers; cutbacks in city services and programs in CETA, recreation, police, and fire; and a severe shortage of jobs at decent wages.

These problems as well as a systematic arson-for-profit syndrome and federal and local spending programs that keep money, jobs and programs from reaching residents of Newark are forcing us out of our neighborhoods -- little by little.

People working together through NCN are trying to resist these problems by working with others where we live -- in our buildings, on our blocks and in our neighborhoods. But we also believe that our chances of success are greatly increased by working on a city-wide basis. By reaching across neighborhood boundaries and by working with others throughout the city, we can take our complaints and ideas and needs to our local, state and federal governments in a much more forceful and convincing way.

NCN, as a group, has received funding from various foundations to do research, organizing and skill-building and information sharing. Some of the resources available to community groups and concerned residents of Newark include: media workshops, analytic slide shows, information on housing and budgets, ideas on how to organize a tenant or block association; research guides; and a limited number of student and legal interns to assist member-groups.

If you need support for your work, and want to offer your weight to that of others across the city, stop by and see us!

38 1/2 Walnut St.

phone 643-7711